

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2

Frequently Asked Questions

December 30, 2011

What is the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CE-BA 2)?

CE-BA 2 is a comprehensive document that amends four different fishery management plans (FMPs). CE-BA 2 includes Amendment 7 to the FMP for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region (Coral FMP); Amendment 23 to the FMP for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Snapper-Grouper FMP); Amendment 21 to the FMP for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico (Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP); and Amendment 1 to the FMP for Pelagic *Sargassum* Habitat of the South Atlantic Region (*Sargassum* FMP).

CE-BA 2 was approved by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) at their June 2011 meeting. CE-BA 2 was approved by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at their August 2011 meeting.

What is the intent of CE-BA 2?

CE-BA 2 modifies management of octocorals; modifies management in the special management zones (SMZs) off South Carolina; modifies sea turtle release gear requirements for snapper-grouper fishermen; and designates essential fish habitat (EFH) and EFH-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

Are any fisheries affected by the measures in CE-BA 2?

Octocoral, snapper-grouper, and coastal migratory pelagic fisheries are affected by measures in CE-BA 2. Regulations will be effective on January 30, 2012.

How has the management of the octocoral fishery changed?

Previously, the octocoral fishery operated under a 50,000 colony quota for the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. Harvest of octocorals in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina was prohibited.

CE-BA 2 modifies the fishery management unit under the Coral FMP to include octocorals off of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina only. Management of octocorals off Florida would be the responsibility of Florida.

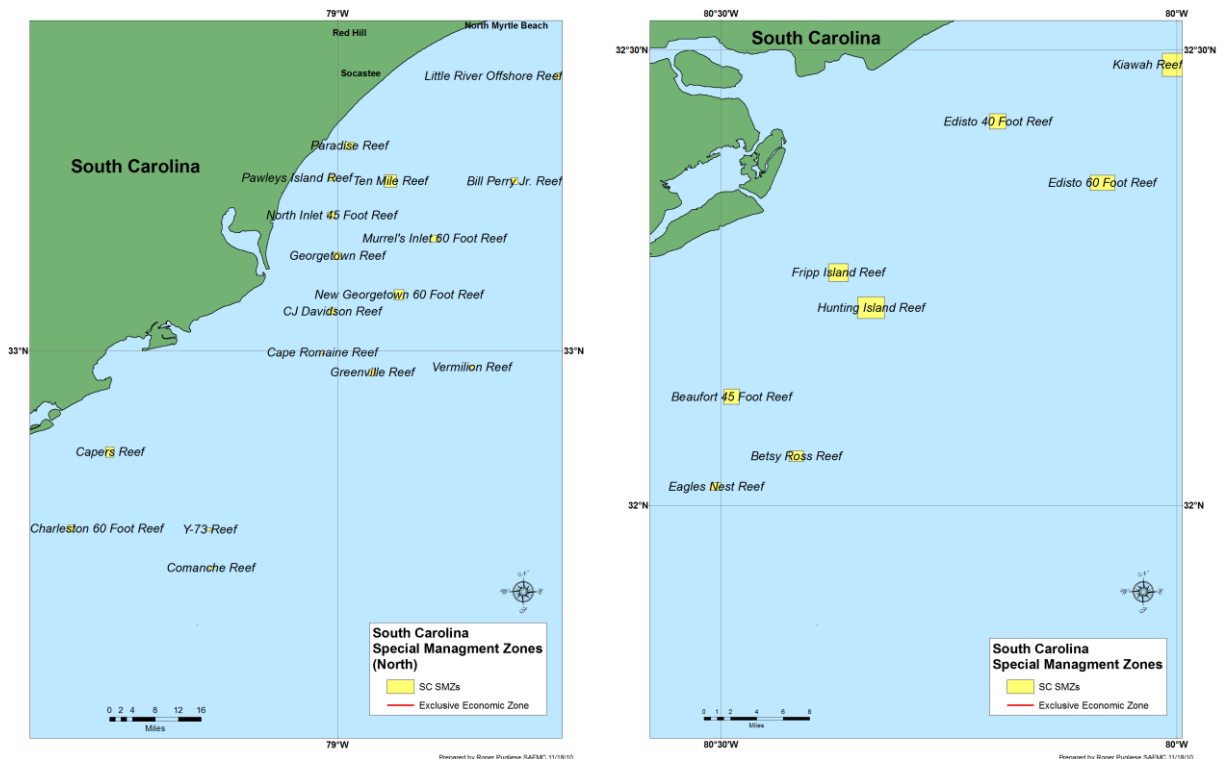
Functionally, the measures have no change on the fishery. Harvest of octocorals north of Florida is still prohibited. The harvest of all coral reefs, stony corals, black corals, fire coral, hydrocorals, and two species of sea fans is still prohibited. Harvest of octocorals off Florida is managed by Florida.

What is the annual catch limit (ACL) for octocorals?

The ACL for octocorals is zero in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The octocoral fishery in Florida is managed by Florida and is not subject to an ACL.

Where are the special management zones (SMZs) impacted by CE-BA 2?

The SMZs affected by CE-BA 2 are located off South Carolina (Figures 1 and 2).



Figures 1 and 2 – SMZs off South Carolina, North and South geographic areas

How does management change in the SMZs?

Harvest and possession of snapper-grouper and coastal migratory pelagic species are limited to the recreational bag limit in the SMZs. This action responds to concern from fishermen regarding commercial quantities being removed from the artificial reefs.

What gear is required for the safe release of incidentally caught sea turtles?

CE-BA 2 modifies sea turtle handling and release gear requirements based on freeboard height of the vessel.

Vessels with a freeboard height of four feet or greater are required to have on board and to use the following sea turtle release gear:

- a long-handled line cutter
- a long-handled dehooker for ingested hooks; or a dehooker for ingested and a dehooker for external hooks
- a long-handled device to pull an “inverted V”
- a dipnet
- cushion/support device (i.e., boat cushion)
- a short-handled dehooker for ingested hooks; or a dehooker for ingested and a dehooker for external hooks
- long-nose or needle-nose pliers
- bolt cutters
- monofilament line cutters, and
- at least two types of mouth openers/mouth gags.

Vessels with a freeboard height of four feet or less are required to have on board and to use the following sea turtle release gear:

- a short-handled dehooker for ingested hooks; or a dehooker for ingested and a dehooker for external hooks
- long-nose or needle-nose pliers
- bolt-cutters
- mono-filament line cutters
- cushion/support device (i.e., boat cushion)
- a dipnet, and
- at least two types of mouth openers/mouth gags.

What are EFH-HAPCs, and will designation of EFH-HAPCs affect the ability to harvest those species?

This designation of EFH-HAPCs has no impact on the fisheries but enables the Council to protect EFH more effectively and take timely actions when necessary. Identifying and describing EFH and EFH-HAPCs is the first step in preventing decreases in biological productivity of managed species.

CE-BA 2 will designate EFH-HAPCs for golden tilefish and blueline tilefish.

EFH-HAPCs for golden tilefish to include (Figure 3 and 4):

- Irregular bottom comprised of troughs and terraces inter-mingled with sand, mud, or shell hash bottom.
- Mud-clay bottoms in depths of 150-300 meters.

EFH-HAPC for blueline tilefish to include (Figure 3 and 4):

- Irregular bottom habitats along the shelf edge in 45-65 meters depth; shelf break.
- Upper slope along the 100-fathom contour (150-225 meters).
- Hardbottom habitats characterized as rock overhangs, rock outcrops, manganese phosphorite rock slab formations, or rocky reefs in the South Atlantic Bight; and the Georgetown Hole (Charleston Lumps) off Georgetown, South Carolina.

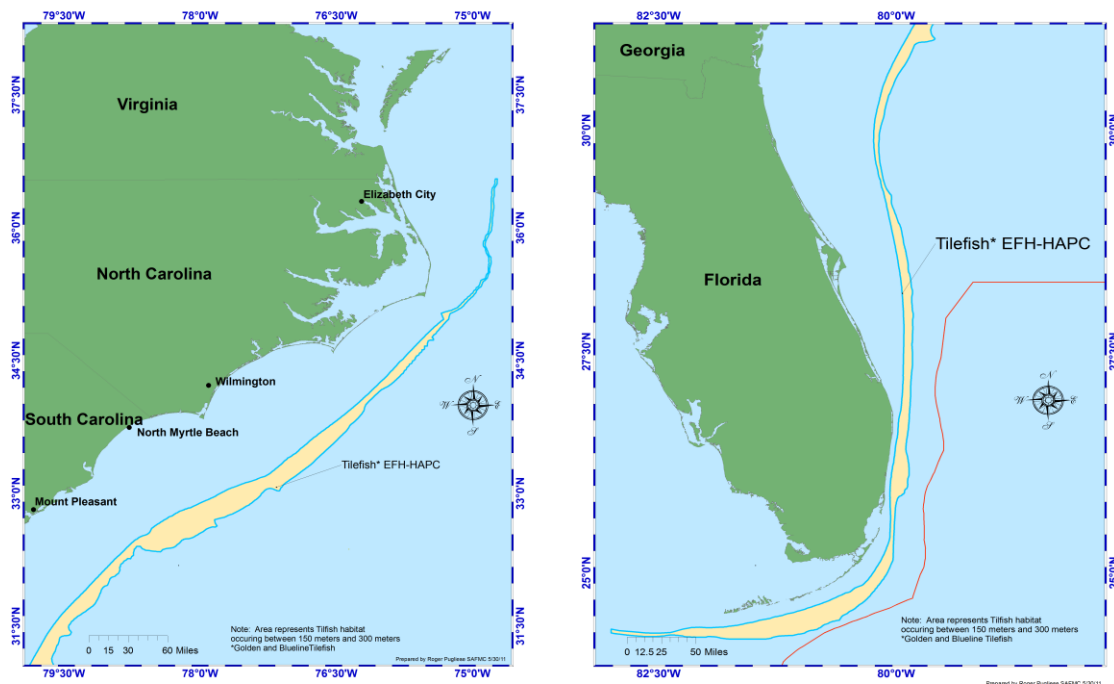


Figure 3 and 4 Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish EFH-HAPC

EFH-HAPCs for the Snapper-Grouper species will include:

Deepwater Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (as implemented in Snapper-Grouper FMP Amendment 14): Snowy Grouper Wreck MPA, Northern South Carolina MPA, Edisto MPA, Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA, Georgia MPA, North Florida MPA, St. Lucie Hump MPA, and East Hump MPA (Figure 5).

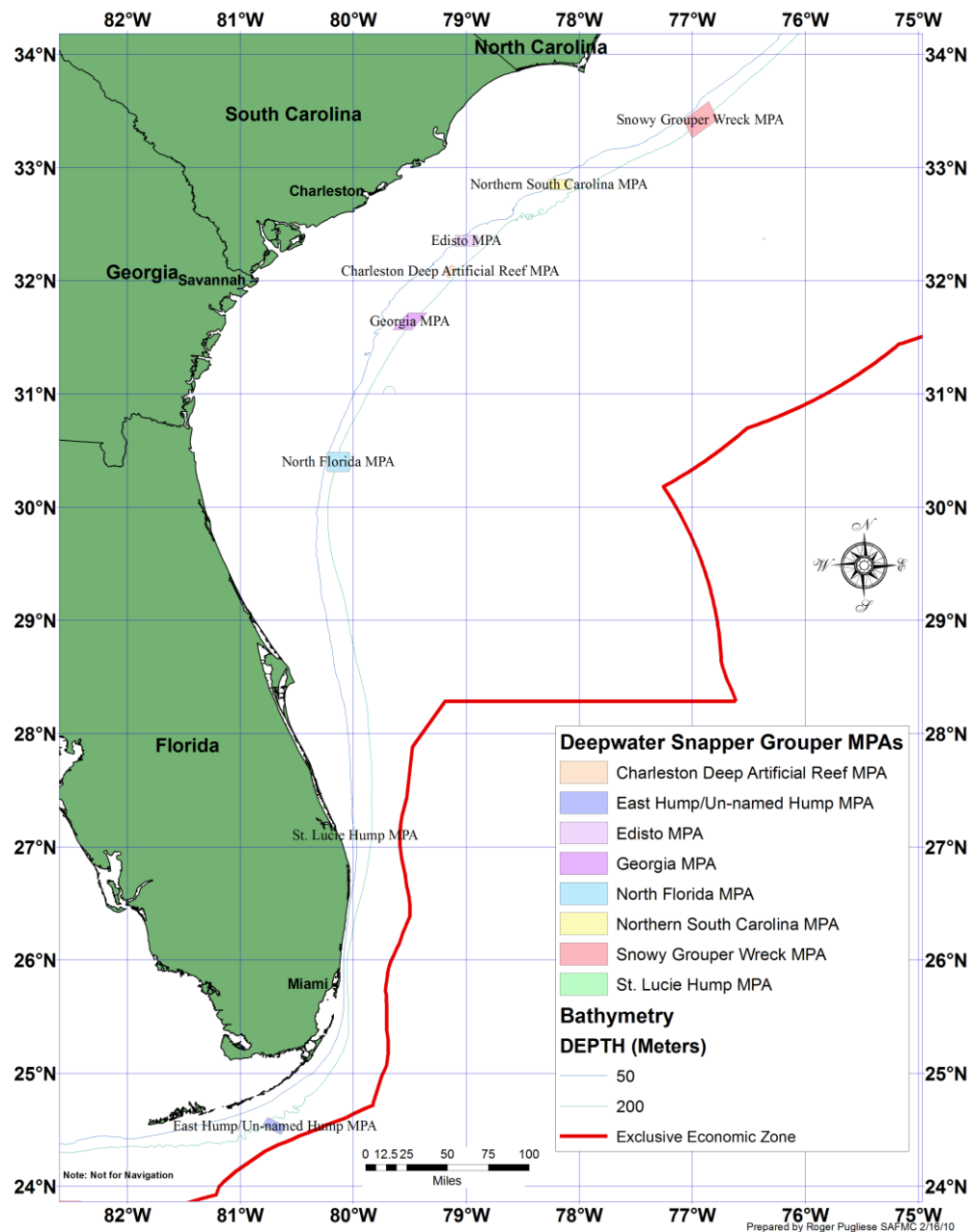


Figure 5: Deepwater Snapper-Grouper MPAs

EFH-HAPCs for the Coral Fishery will include:

Deepwater Coral HAPCs (as implemented through Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1): Cape Lookout Coral HAPC, Cape Fear Coral HAPC, Blake Ridge Diapir Coral HAPC, Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC, Pourtales Terrace Coral HAPC (Figure 6).

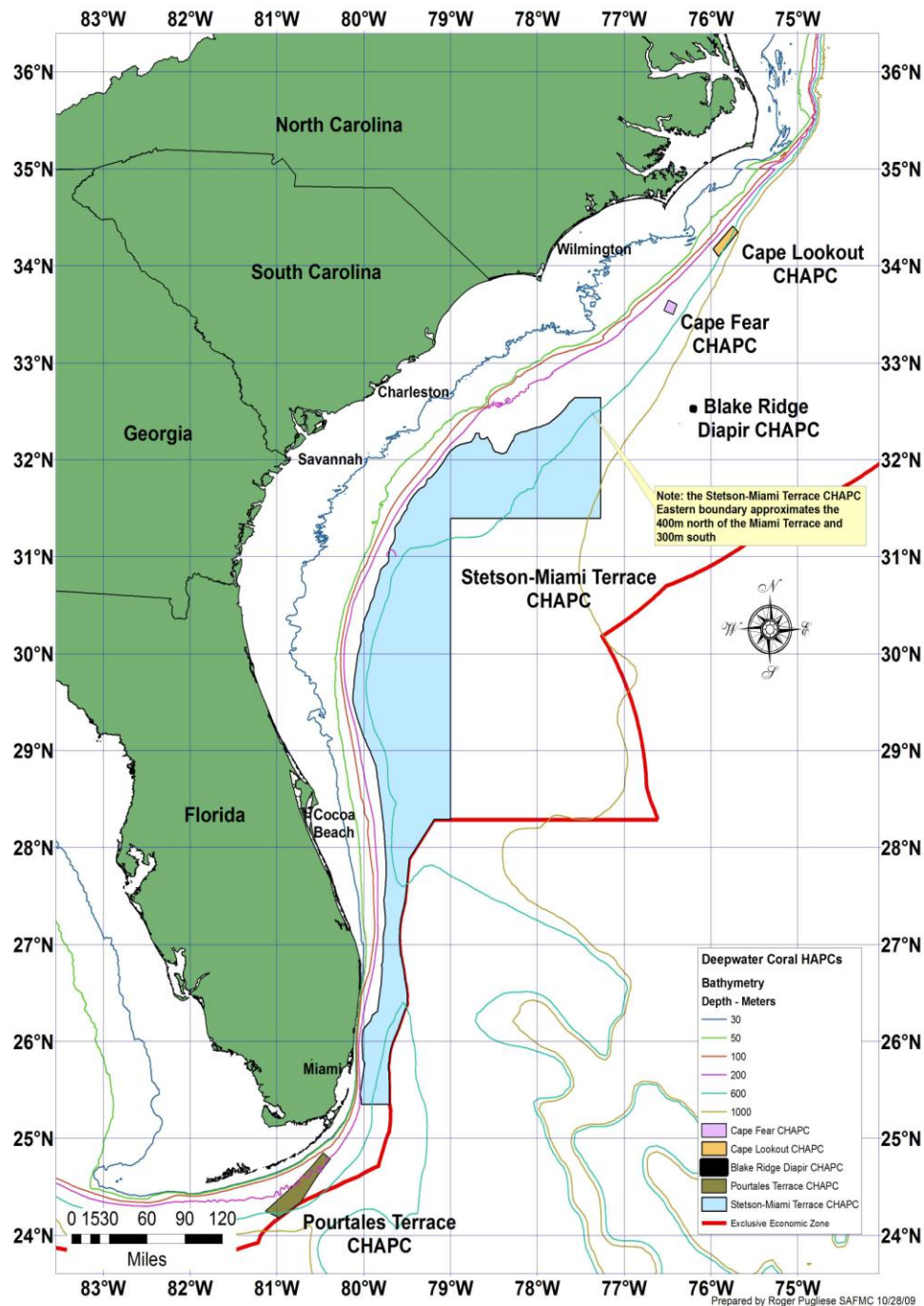


Figure 6: Deepwater Coral HAPCs

What new EFH is being designated by CE-BA 2?

CE-BA 2 amends the *Sargassum* FMP to designate the top 10 meters of the water column in the South Atlantic EEZ bounded by the Gulfstream, as EFH for pelagic *Sargassum*. This designation has no impact on the fishery but enables the Council to protect EFH more effectively and take timely actions when necessary. Identifying and describing EFH is the first step in preventing decreases in biological productivity of pelagic *Sargassum* and other managed or prey species dependent on pelagic *Sargassum*.

Where can I get a copy of CE-BA 2?

CE-BA 2 can be found on our Web site: www.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov and on the Council's Web site: www.safmc.net.